

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SYDNEY 02656 190708Z

15

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /068 W

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R 190430Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6654

INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH UNN

AMCONSUL BRISBANE UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 2656

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: ALP LEADERSHIP

REFS: (A) CANBERRA 8388, (B) MELBOURNE 2095

1. IN BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH JOHN DUCKER, STATE
ALP PRESIDENT, HE IN GENERAL CONFIRMED THE DISCRIPTION
CONTAINED IN REFTELS REGARDING FUTURE OF ALP.

2. FITZGIBBON OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS IS DEFINITELY
A FRONT-RUNNER TO REPLACE HAWKE. FITZGIBBON'S
STRENGTH ARISES MORE FROM HIS OWN PERSONALITY
THAN FROM THE INFLUENCE OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS.
AS FOR DUCKER HIMSELF, HE INDICATED THAT WHILE HE
MIGHT BE REGARDED AS ONE POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO
HAWKE, HE DOES NOT SEEK THE JOB AND WOULD PREFER
NOT REPEAT NOT TO HAVE IT.

3. WHITLAM WILL ALMOST SURELY BE RE-ELECTED AS
LEADER OF THE ALP AND DUCKER IS AT LEAST AS INTERESTED
IN WHO MIGHT BECOME THE DEPUTY LEADER. HE WOULD
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SYDNEY 02656 190708Z

DEFINITELY PREFER WHAT HE DESCRIBES AS A "PAUL

KEATING TYPE". HE RECOGNIZES THAT KEATING IS VERY YOUNG BUT CONSIDERING THAT "THE ALP MAY NOT REGAIN GOVERNMENT SOON, MAYBE WE COULD USE A YOUNG MAN AS DEPUTY LEADER". DUCKER WOULD OPPOSE AN OLDER TYPE SUCH AS TOM UREN OR LES JOHNSON.

4. IT WAS "A BAD MISTAKE" FOR WHITLAM AND HAWKE TO TIP THEIR HAND PREMATURELY ON THE POSSIBILITY OF HAWKE SUCCEEDING WHITLAM. IT STIMULATED OPPOSITION TO WHITLAM BY THOSE WHO SAW A CABAL CONSPIRACY FOR WHITLAM TO KEEP THE SEAT WARM AND HAND IT OVER TO HAWKE. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, DUCKER THINKS THE SITUATION HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REPAIRED. THERE IS A "GRASS ROOTS" MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT WHITLAM. IN THIS CONNECTION DUCKER SAID HE HOPES THAT LIONEL BOWEN WILL ANNOUNCE HIS SUPPORT FOR WHITLAM IN A SPEECH WHICH HE IS SCHEDULED TO MAKE TONIGHT AT KINGSFORD-SMITH. THIS SUGGESTS THAT NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH ALP IS HAVING SOME SUCCESS IN PRESSURING BOWEN AS REPORTED PARA 4, REF A.

5. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, DUCKER ATTRIBUTED THE OVERWHELMING SIZE OF LABOR'S DEFEAT TO FOUR FACTORS:

- A. UNBALANCED ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES WHICH FAVOR L/CP;
- B. THE "LOANS/KHEMLANI ISSUE";
- C. WHITLAM'S ABRUPT DISMISSALS OF CABINET MEMBERS;
- D. THE APPEARANCE OF "INEFFICIENCY AND INCOMPETENCE".

IN ADDITION, DUCKER EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT MANY (INCLUDING HIMSELF) HAD UNDERESTIMATED THE PROBABLE SIZE OF LABOR'S DEFEAT BECAUSE OF TWO FACTORS WHICH WARPED THEIR OWN OBJECTIVITY:

- A. THEIR OWN SHOCK BY THE ABRUPT MANNER OF WHITLAM'S DISMISSAL BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SYDNEY 02656 190708Z

- B. THE PERSONAL PUBLIC IMAGE OF STRENGTH GENERATZD BY WHITLAM HIMSELF, A MAN WHO APPEARS LARGER THAN LIFE, DOMINANT, CONFIDENT AND INVULNERABLE. THIS FACTOR MAY HAVE AFFECTED THE OPPONENTS AS WELL AS THE SUPPORTERS OF LABOR.

6. FOR THE FUTURE DUCKER ANTICIPATES INCREASED

PRESSURE FROM THE LEFT-WING OF THE PARTY AND THE UNION MOVEMENT. THE LEFT WILL ARGUE THAT THE RESULT CONFIRMS THAT AUSTRALIAN POLITICS IS DOMINATED BY A "RULING CLASS" WHICH CAN ONLY BE DEFEATED BY MORE MILITANT METHODS, EVEN INCLUDING "STREET ACTION". NEVERTHELESS, WHILE DUCKER FORESEES THIS OMINOUS PRESSURE, HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE LABOR PARTY WILL FALL UNDER LEFT-WING CONTROL.
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